

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-09

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY. AS OF FEBRUARY 16, 2449 CANDIDATES REGISTERED IN 38 PARTIES. RED GAURS BOMB NEW FORCE HEADQUARTERS. KHUKRIT SACKS THAWIT KLINPRATHUM, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. END SUMMARY.

1. THE REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES CLOSED ON FEBRUARY 13 BUT THE EXACT NUMBER OF CANDIDATES IS NOT YET KNOWN. NO OFFICIAL LIST WILL BE AVAILABLE BEFORE FEBRUARY 20, BY WHICH TIME THE CANDIDATES WILL HAVE TO DEPOSIT THEIR 4,000 BAHT AND THE NECESSARY NUMBER OF PHOTOGRAPHS. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO MINISTRY OF INTERIOR FIGURES RELEASED ON FEBRUARY 16, 2449 CANDIDATES WERE REGISTERED, OF WHOM 43 HAVE YET TO BE ASSIGNED NUMBERS. THESE 2449 WERE MEMBERS OF 38 DIFFERENT PARTIES RANGING FROM THE DEMOCRAT PARTY, WITH 261 CANDIDATES, TO THE PEOPLE'S JUSTICE PARTY WITH ONE CANDIDATE. NO RPT NO PARTY ENTERED CANDIDATES FOR ALL 279 HOUSE SEATS. OTHER PARTIES WITH MORE THAN 100 CANDIDATES ARE THE SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (232), THE

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THAI NATION (216), THE SOCIAL JUSTICE (205), THE NEW

FORCE (204, THE PEOPLE'S FORCE (147), THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND (122), THE MORAL SOVEREIGNTY (118), AND THE SOCIAL NATIONALIST PARTY (102). THESE NINE PARTIES THEREFORE FIELDED ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE CANDIDATES SO FAR REGISTERED. IN THE JANUARY 1975, ELECTIONS THERE WERE 42 PARTIES, 2199 CANDIDATES AND THE TOP NINE PARTIES RAN 67 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES.

2. SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT FEBRUARY 15, MEMBERS OF THE "RED GAURS," AN EXTREME RIGHT-WING ORGANIZATION MADE UP OF YOUNG THUGS AND HOODLUMS PRONE TO VIOLENT ACTION, THREW BOMBS AT THE NEW FORCE HEADQUARTERS IN BANGKOK. ONE OF THE ATTACKERS WAS KILLED AND ANOTHER HAD HIS RIGHT HAND BLOWN OFF. NONE OF THE THREE GUARDS, WHO WERE ONLY PERSONS AT THE NEW FORCE HEADQUARTERS WHEN THE ATTACK OCCURRED, WAS INJURED. THE BUILDING AS ONLY SLIGHTLY DAMAGED.

3. THE LEADER OF THE RED GAURS, SOMSAK KAWANMONGKHON, STRONGLY DENIED THAT HIS GROUP WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACK. HE ADMITTED THAT THE PERSON KILLED AND THE ONE INJURED WERE RED GAUR MEMBERS, BUT HE MAINTAINED THEAT THEY ACTED ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE NOT AT RED GAUR DIRECTION. SOME THAIS, AMONG THEM DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN, (WHO IS SUSPECTED TO BE CONNECTED WITH THE RED GAURS) SAID THAT THE NEW FORCE PARTY MIGHT HAVE ARRANGED THIS "BOMBING" AS A PLOY TO GAIN SYMPATHY IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS. THIS IS THE THIRD PUBLICIZED ACT OF VIOLENCE SINCE THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT WHICH MIGHT BE LINKED TO THE ELECTIONS. THE OTHERS WERE THE MURDERS OF THE THAI NATION CANVASSERS, SURAPHON SIRUNGSUKCHINDA IN CHONBURI PROVINCE ON FEBRUARY 9 AND SURACHAI SAENGWANIT IN PETCHABURI PROVINCE ON FEBRUARY 12. THERE IS STRONG INDICATION THAT THESE MURDERS WERE NOT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED.

3. ON FEBRUARY 13 PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT ANNOUNCED THE DISMISSAL OF THAWIT KLINPRATUM AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATIVES AND OF BUNSONG SOMCHAI AS DEPUTY MVXINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND

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COOPERATIVES. HE ALSO ANNOUNCED THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE RESIGNATION OF ANAN PHAKPRAPHAI AS DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH. THE ANNOUNCEMENT CAME AS A SURPRISE. KHUKRIT SATED THAWIT WITHOUT SPECIFIC CABINET APPROVAL OR DISCUSSION, ALTHOUGH HE DID SAY THAT HE HAD CONSULTED WITH MANY MEMBERS OF THE CABINET AS WELL AS OTHER PROMINENT THAIS.

4. KHUKRIT SAID THAT THAWIT WAS FIRED BECAUSE THAWIT, INSTEAD OF IMPLEMENTING THE PADDY RICE GUARANTEE PROGRAM, HAD TRIED TO SABOTAGE IT FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES. KHUKRIT SAID THAT THAWIT, A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE WHICH LAID DOWN THE GENERAL MEASURES FOR CARRYING OUT THE PLAN, HAD MADE NO OBJECTIONS WHILE THE PROGRAM WAS BEING DISCUSSED. LATER HE PUBLICLY REFUSED TO COOPERATE IN IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM AND ATTACKED CABINET MEMBERS, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER.

5. THE FIRING OF THAWIT IS THE LATEST AND THE LAST CHAPTER OF THAWIT VERSUS EVERYONE ELSE. HE HAD HAD SEVERE ROWS IN PUBLIC WITH KHUKRIT, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAMAN ADIREKSAN, HIS FORMER DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE ANAN PHAKPRAPHAI, MEMBERS OF HIS OWN PARTY AND WITH FINANCE MINISTER BUNCHU ROTCHANASATHIAN, AMONG OTHERS. KHUKRIT ALSO SUSPECTED THAT THAWIT HAD NEGOTIATED WITH THE OPPOSITION BEHIND HIS BACK IN ITS ATTEMPT TO BRING HIS GOVERNMENT DOWN LAST DECEMBER-JANUARY. HIS STUBBORN OPPOSITION TO THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S GUARANTEED PADDY PRICE PROGRAM WAS APPAREKTLY THE LAST STRAW. KHUKRIT CAN GAIN SOME POLITICAL CAPITAL FROM THE SACKING. THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING CRITICISM THAT THE PROGRAM WAS NOT BEING PROPERLY IMPLEMENTED. BY SACKING THAWIT, KHUKRIT CAN HEAP THE BLAME ON HIM WHILE ACCEPTING THE KUDOS FOR FOSTERING THE PROGRAM. WHITEHOUSE

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